

BAKER BASEBALL NIPS PHILOMATH IN NONLEAGUE GAME

Bulldogs win on Carter's walkoff homer

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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Silas Carter first preserved Baker's chance to beat Philomath in the final inning of a nonleague baseball game Saturday, April 23, at La Grande. Then he took advantage of that chance.

After getting a strikeout as a relief pitcher in the top of the seventh to hold the Warriors' lead at 1-0, Carter hit a two-run, inside-the-park walkoff home run in the bottom of the inning to give the Bulldogs a thrilling 2-1 win.

Carter's dramatic shot to deep right center field, with two strikes, also earned him the win on the mound.

But it was his teammate, Hudson Spike, who dominated Philomath's lineup for most of the game in a classic pitchers' duel with the Warriors' Skylar Brolin.

Spike allowed just five hits and struck out nine in 6.2 innings before yielding to Carter, normally a starting pitcher, in the top of the seventh.

"Hudson just pitched an outstanding game," Baker coach Tim Smith said. "He had the best outing that I've seen him have."

The sophomore lefthander hasn't pitched much this season, and Smith said he initially intended to limit Spike to 50 pitches.

"But he said his arm felt good and it kept feeling good," Smith said.

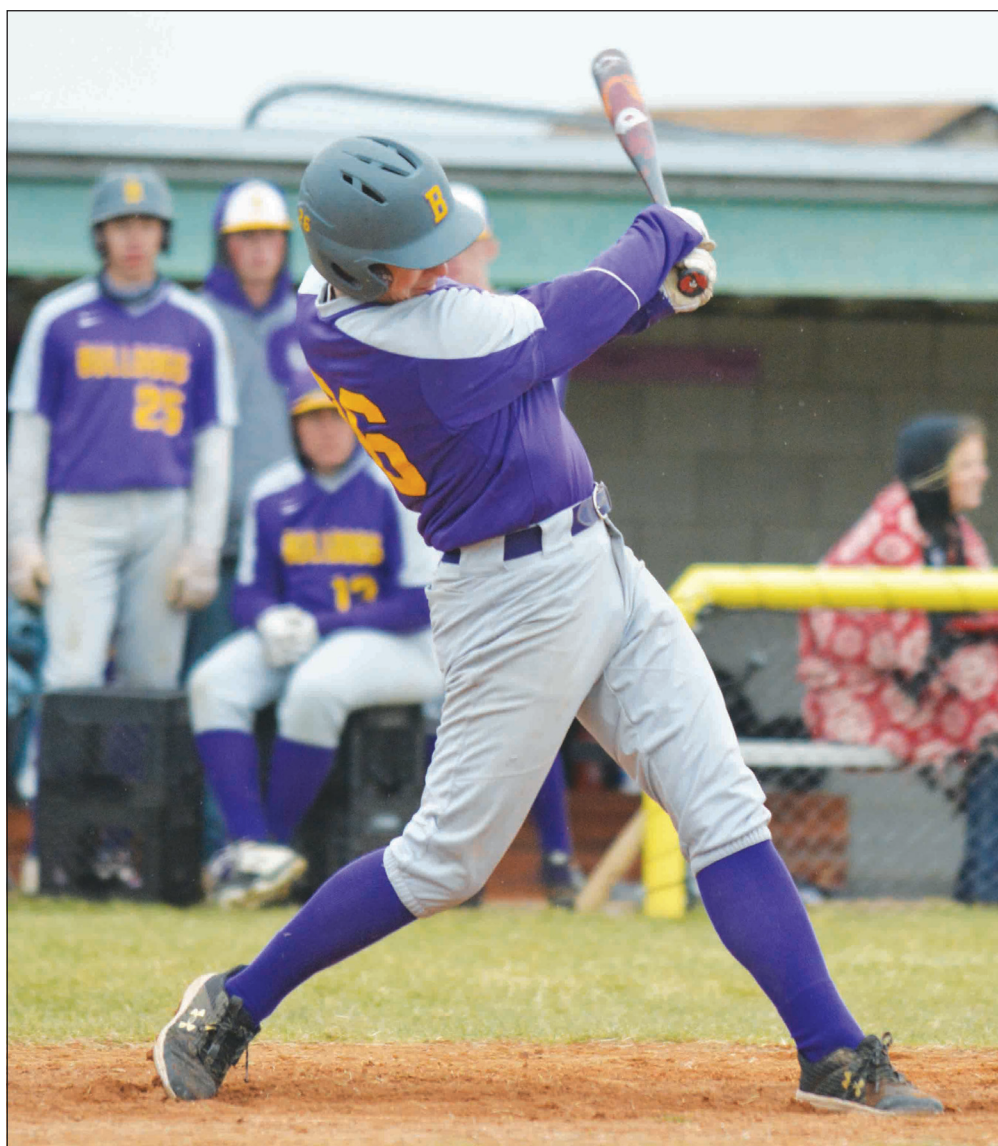
Spike ended up throwing 99 total pitches, 60 of them strikes.

In the top of the seventh, Philomath's Logan Carter doubled with two outs and Cameron Ordway followed with a walk.

Silas Carter then replaced Spike. Carter hit the first batter he faced, Carson Gerding, to load the bases.

But Carter then struck out David Griffith the keep the lead at 1-0.

Smith admitted that he considered replacing Carter after he hit the batter, but he ultimately decided to leave him in, and it paid off.



Silas Carter bats against La Grande on Wednesday, April 20, 2022, at the Sports Complex. Carter was the winning pitcher and also hit a walkoff inside-the-park home run in Baker's 2-1 win over Philomath on Saturday, April 23, 2022.

Carter said it was "very stressful" to enter the game with two runners on base and Baker trying to prevent Philomath from extending its lead, although in previous seasons he normally pitched in relief rather than as a starter.

Carter, who's a senior, said that after hitting Griffith to load the bases, he was "definitely thinking I wanted to get a strikeout" for the final out.

In the bottom of the seventh, with Philomath still clinging to a 1-0 lead, Jaxon Logsdon led off by lining the ball to the gap in left center for what looked like an extra base hit. But left-

fielder Alek Russell made a diving catch.

"Jaxon got robbed," Smith said. "He hit a laser."

Baker's next batter, Logan Capon, was hit in the back of the helmet by a pitch.

That brought up Silas Carter. He had been playing shortstop but had not yet had an at bat, with Thomas Smithson as designated hitter.

Smith said he decided to give Carter a chance. With an 0-2 count, Brolin threw a curveball. Smith said Carter tends to struggle with curveballs.

Carter agrees. "I hate hitting slower

pitches," he said.

Not this one.

Carter drove a high fly ball that went nearly to the wall in right center. Capon scored easily, and Smith, as the third base coach, said that as the right-fielder threw the ball to Griffith, the second baseman, for a relay, Griffith briefly bobbled the ball.

Smith said he waved Carter around third, and he crossed the plate with the winning run a couple seconds ahead of Griffith's throw.

"It paid off," Smith said. "It was exciting."

Carter, meanwhile, was just

Philomath 0 0 0 0 1 0—1
Baker 0 0 0 0 0 2—2
Brolin and Carter. Spike, Carter (7) and Logsdon.

running as fast as he could.

When he hit the ball he heard Smith yell "get out, ball," and he thought he had a chance for a conventional home run.

As he was rounding second base, Carter saw Smith initially motioning for him to hold up at third base.

Carter said that's what he expected. The last he had seen, while rounding second, the throw from the outfield was on its way to the second baseman.

But once he was sprinting between second and third, the play was happening behind him. Carter didn't see Griffith briefly mishandle the throw from the outfield.

"I was surprised (Smith) was sending me (to home plate)," Carter said.

As he ran the final 90 feet he saw the Philomath catcher — the other Carter, Logan — move slightly, as though he were getting ready for the relay throw to arrive.

Silas Carter said he decided to slide, hoping he could evade a potential tag.

It turned out that wasn't necessary, as he touched the plate before the ball got there.

"I popped up and Logan (Capon, who had scored the tying run) was freaking out," Carter said. "It was a great feeling."

Smith said he hopes the Bulldogs have gained confidence with a win over Philomath, a team he expects will contend for its own conference title and will make the Class 4A playoffs.

"That's the best team we've beaten this year," Smith said of the Warriors. "We played as good of a game as we have all year."

Philomath took its 1-0 lead in the top of the sixth, scoring on an error on a pickoff attempt at second base. Baker, after six errors in its previous two

games, had just two miscues against Philomath.

The Warriors had runners on first and second with two outs, but Spike ended the threat when Ty May grounded out to second baseman Cole Hester.

Brolin took the loss despite allowing just four hits — two by Hester — striking out eight and walking only one.

Baker had one of its best scoring chances in the first inning, when Hayden Younger led off with a double to center. He stole third with two outs but was stranded there.

Philomath turned double plays in both the second and third to thwart Baker scoring bids.

The Bulldogs also relied on defense to keep the Warriors at bay.

In the top of the fifth, with Blake Niemann at first base with one out, Spike struck out Logan Carter and Logsdon threw out Niemann at second to end the threat.

Philomath traveled to La Grande to play single games against La Grande and, later, against Baker.

La Grande beat the Warriors 5-0 in the first game.

After another nonleague game on Monday, April 25, against Heppner/Ione at the Sports Complex, Baker returns to Greater Oregon League play on Friday, April 29, by playing host to Mac-Hi in a double-header. The first pitch is set for 2 p.m. Baker, 9-8 overall and 4-2 in league play, swept the Pioneers at Milton-Freewater on April 6.

Smith said he hopes the dramatic win over Philomath will propel Baker to a winning streak after disappointing losses, by scores of 10-0 and 16-0, to La Grande on April 20.

Spike's dominant performance on the mound was a welcome development, Smith said. Having another reliable pitcher to join Capon, Carter and Connor Chastain would be a major benefit for the Bulldogs — particularly given that Spike, unlike that trio, is a leftie, which are relatively rare in high school baseball, Smith said.

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